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General U. S. Grant to I. N. Morris.

Nashville, Tennessee, January 20th, 1864.

Hon. I. N. Morris.

Dear Sir:

Your letter of the 29th of Dec. I did not see until two days ago. I receive many such but do not answer. Yours, however, is written in such a kindly spirit and as you ask for an answer confidentially I will not withhold it. Allow me to say however that I am not a politician never was, and hope never to be and could not write a political letter. My only desire is to serve the country in her present trials. To do this efficiently it is necessary to have the confidence of the Army and the people. I know no way to better secure this end than by a faithful performance of my duties. So long as I hold my present position I do not believe that I have the right to criticise the policy or orders of those above me, or to give utterance to views of my own except to the authorities at Washington, through the General-in-Chief of the Army. In this respect I know I have proven myself a good soldier. In your letter you say I have it in my power to be the next president. This is the last thing in the world I desire. I would regard such a consumation as being highly unfortunate for myself, if not for the country. Through Providence I have attained to more than I had ever hoped, and with the position I now hold in the regular Army, if allowed to retain it, will be more than satisfied. I certainly shall never shape a sentiment, or the opinion of a thought with the view of being a candidate for office. I scarcely know the inducement that could be held out to me to accept the office, and unhesitatingly say that I infinitely prefer my present position to that of any civil office within the gift of the people. This is a private letter not intended for others to see or read, because I want to avoid being heard from by the public except through acts in the performance of my legitimate duties.

I have the honor to be

Very respectfully,

Your obt. svt.,

U. S. GRANT.